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# NOTES ON SEMITIC GRAMMAR.

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## I.

### THE FIRST VOWEL OF THE IMPERFECT TENSE-STEM.

The present forms of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic imperfect of the simple stem (Qal, Pe'al, I.) show the complete *absence* of a vowel between the first and second radicals, cf. the types יִקְטֹל, תִּמְכֹּן, יִפְתֹּן. Hence the possibility of forms like יִפֹּל, יִנֹּשׁ, יִתֹּן, תִּפְנֹן, etc. Because it is commonly supposed that Old Arabic possesses a fuller vocalization than any other Semitic dialect—cf. e. g. an ordinary word like ذَرَعَ = زَرَعَ (أَزْرَعَ)—the inference is evidently justified that, where an Arabic form presents vocalic scarcity, we are treading upon common Semitic ground. The type yaqtul, etc. is pronounced to be the original (Wright, *Comp. Gram.*, p. 181), while the Hebrew יַעֲמֹד and יַעֲמְדוּ are represented as “Zerdehnungen” of the archetype and as resultants of a phonetic decay peculiar to Hebrew (*ibid.*, p. 91 sq.; Stade, *Hebraeische Gram.*, § 102). I think that I have sufficient evidence to prove that the form yaqtul, etc. presupposes an earlier form of the type yaqvtul (by v I indicate a full vowel the exact character of which I propose to determine in the second part of my paper), etc.

I. Argument from *consistency*. Philippi, in an article published in the *Morgenlaendische Forschungen* (pp. 69–106), which it was not my privilege to peruse till shortly before writing these lines, has made it a point to derive all other stems of the verb from the simple stem, or, as he calls it, the “Grundstamm,” not merely the أَنْوَاع of the type فاعل a. فاعل, but notably the augmented stems. Thus, انْقَتَلَ compared with نَقِطَل = نَقِطَل goes back to na+qatal, saqtal to sa+qatal, 'aqtal to 'a+qatal, etc. (p. 73). He compares (p. 74) لָכַתַּב לְכַתֵּב, evidently thinking of לָצַבַּא Num. VIII. 24, to which I would add הִצַּפִּינוּ, Ex. II. 3, and of nominal prefixed forms מִמְרָרִים Job IX. 18; מִמְתָּקִים Cant. V. 16 and others. The reason for the disappearance of the first vowel of the stem is not far to seek. It appears from several sources (cf. *ibid.*, p. 78) that prefixed forms, unless stronger motives came into play, allowed in earliest times the

main accent to fall upon the syllable containing the prefix, thus subjecting the next vowel to complete want of stress and hence of articulation. Why not be consistent and derive yaqtul, etc. from an older ya'qv̄tul, etc.?

II. Argument from *infinitives* of the type qutl a. qetōl. Philippi (l. c., p. 81) perceives the difficulty of explaining Arabic yaqtul (I substitute qtl for his ktb) compared with the infinitive qutl (kutb), with which he puts together Hebrew כְּתַבִּי (with hard ב—e. g. הִכְבֵּי Gen. xix. 21—which is by the way the exception; the rule is כְּתַבִּי) as over against כְּתַב. Shall we believe in migration (metathesis) of vowels? Lagarde, (*Uebersicht*, p. 153) knows that qutl and qetōl go back to one common form, qutul, of which the former is the paroxytone and the latter the oxytone. Why not go a step further, and say that yaqtul = ya' + qutul?

III. Argument from the *imperative*. To the type yaqtul belongs the imperative أَتْتَلْ = Hebrew קַטֵּל which latter, if compared with קַטֵּלָה—e. g. מְלָכָה Jd. ix. 8—a. קַטֵּלִי—e. g. הִרְגֵּנִי Num. xi. 15—leaves no doubt as to what the ׀ in קַטֵּל stands for. The imperative is nothing but the imperfect (jussive) minus the preformative (of the second person). Hence קַטֵּל qutul' presupposes ta' + qutul.

IV. Argument from a *comparison of the imperfects* I., II. and VII. The imperfect forms of the intensive and N reflexive stems (II. a. VII.) show the existence of a vowel (the same vowel) between the first and second radicals:

يُكْتَلُّ يَنْقَتَلُ, نَحْمَلُ نَحْمَلُ. The Arabic language has many imperfects

in the I. of the type yaqtīl. In Hebrew we find יִתֵּן, יִלֵּךְ, etc., in Biblical Aramaic יִפֵּל, in Syriac نَحْمَل. We may also compare the impf. of the IV.:

يُكْتَلُّ يَكْمَلُ and, without for the present laying stress upon the vowel of

the preformative, put down the following imperfect types as related: I. yaqtīl, II. yuqattīl, IV. yuqtīl, VII. yanqattīl. Does the relationship merely consist in the identity of the second vowel of the stem (i), or does it extend further? The analogy of the perfect on the one hand, and the additional identity of the first vowel of the stem (a) in two of the imperfects (II. and VII.) should help to answer our question. If, with Philippi (l. c.), we see in qattal and qâtal (III.) modified types of qatal, we shall have similarly to look for a "Grundstamm" to (yu) qattīl, i. e. we have to postulate ya' + qatīl, which indeed we find reproduced also in yanqattīl = ya'naqa'tīl. The first vowel of the stem remains if stressed, and disappears if unaccented. Thus, ya'qatīl becomes yaqtīl.

V. Argument from *Ethiopic*. Ethiopic (cf. Wright, l. c., p. 181) indeed has preserved the type yaqatīl in allowing the first vowel of the stem to be

accented:  $y\acute{e}qátel$ . It uses the latter form for the Arabic indicative, while it differentiates the type  $y\acute{e}qtél = ya'qatil$  for the subjunctive and jussive.

VI. Argument from *infinitives of the type qatil*. The relation of the s. c. infinitive construct in Hebrew to the imperfect is obvious (cf. Barth, *Nominalbildung*, p. 152):  $קָטַל : יִקְטַל = קָטַל : יִקְטַל = הִקְטַל : יִקְטַל$ , etc. We must agree with Professor Barth (l. c., p. 103 sq.) in connecting nouns like  $גִּזְלָן$  etc. with  $יִגְזַל$  etc. Hence  $קָטַל$  is the exact prototype of  $קָטַל$ ,  $הִקְטַל$  etc. in the same manner as the s. c. infin. absolute  $קָטַל$  explains  $קָטַל$ ,  $נִקְטַל$  etc. (*ibid.*, p. 72) and  $יִגְזַל = ya\ gázil$ .

We shall now proceed to our next task, viz. to determine the exact character of the first vowel in the "Grundstamm" of the imperfect, the existence of which in common Semitic we have endeavored to prove from six independent points of view. Some of the sources already adduced will help us in obtaining our aim.

I. The imperative forms in Hebrew and Arabic.  $קָטַל$  compared with  $קָטַלְנִי$ ,  $קָטַלְנִי$  (v. *supra*) and the rarer  $קָטַלְנִי$ —e. g.  $מִלְכִּי$  Jd. ix. 10—points to qutul with which goes Arabic  $uqtul$ , i. e., the prefixed element is identical with the disappearing stem vowel.— $كَبَّرَ$ ,  $كَبَّرَ$ ,  $كَبَّرِ$ ,  $اَفْعَلْ$  point to qital,  $اَضْرِبْ$  to qitil. Hence we obtain the following three types: 1.

qutul; 2. qitil; 3. qital. The first and second forms are at once intelligible; not so the third. For if the principle be found in the assimilation of the first vowel to the second, we should expect the third type to be qatal.

II. The common Hebrew infinitives  $קָטַל$ , with suffixes  $קָטַלְנִי$ ,  $קָטַלְכֶם$  = qorobekem,  $שָׁבַב$  with  $שָׁבַבְנָה$  point again to 1. qutul; 3. qital. If Barth's explanation of forms like  $נִפְלָם$  (Hebr. imperf.  $יָפַל$ , Bibl. Aram.  $יָפַל$ ),  $שָׁבַרְנִי$  (Hebr.  $יִשְׁבֹּר$ , Arab.  $يَسْتَبِر$ ) etc. (l. c., p. 104) be correct, we shall equally obtain for the second type the form qitil. In Arabic, we find as ordinary infinitive forms: 1. qutul, e. g.  $قُبِّلَ$  (impf.  $يَقْبُلُ$ ); 2. qatil, e. g.  $كَذِبَ$  (impf.  $يَكْذِبُ$ ), which type is easily recognized in Hebrew  $בָּעַר$ ,  $גָּרַר$ ,  $גָּזַל$ , etc.; 3. qatal, e. g.  $חָרַג$  cf.  $يَخْرُجُ$ , represented in Hebrew in forms like  $אָשַׁם$ ,  $צָמָא$ ,  $רָעַב$  (impff.  $יִצְמָא$ ,  $יִרָעַב$ ); also qital and qutul (for fuller examples cf. Barth, l. c., pp. 101, 103, 105, 106). If qutl be the paroxytone of qutul (v. *supra*), Arab.  $كَذِبَ$  by the side of  $كَذِبَ$  can be explained only by assuming  $*كَذِبَ$  (paroxytone) as a medium (cf. Lagarde, l. c., p. 8, l. 25—p. 9, l. 12); similarly Hebr.

גִּיל compared with גִּיל; hence the existence of 2. qitil in Arabic is proven. It is needless for me to reproduce Professor Barth's list of nouns, the connection of which with the imperfect tense-stem can not be doubted. I must refer the reader to the book itself. Thus from the various forms of imperfect nouns we obtain the following types for the imperfect tense-stem: 1. qatul, qutul; 2. qatil, qitil; 3. qatal, qital, qutal.

III. The imperfect forms of the II. and VII. prove the existence of 2. qatil.

IV. Similarly Ethiopic *yəqátēl*.

V. The vowel of the preformative may be taken as an index of the character of the lost stem vowel. اَضْرَبَ, اَفْعَلَ, اَتَقَلَّلَ justify this assumption. Hence يَقْتُلُ points to yaqatul, تَصِفُ يَكْتُلُ to yuqutul. (I think that yiqtol stands for yoqtol, cf. ראשון = ראש + ון = תיכון, תוך + ון = תוך, etc., notably חָצַן *ψ* cxxxix. 7 compared with חָצַן Neh. v. 13 a. חָצַן Is. XLIX. 22; cf. also Barth, l. c., p. 24; also Θεδμὸρ, Θεδμὸρ = תְּרַמַּר—Lagarde, l. c., p. 125 note.) يَفْعَلُ presupposes yaqatal, كَبَّرَ—yiqital; يَضْرِبُ points to yaqatil, يَتَن to yiqitil. We obtain again the types: 1. qatul, qutul; 2. qatil, qitil; 3. qatal, qital.

VI. Hebrew יַעֲמֹד, יַעֲשֶׂה = ya'amud, ya'ašamû. With the former compare עָמַד = עָבַד. We find once more: 1. qatul; 3. qatal.

VII. Ἰσαάκ cf. יִצְחָק Gen. XXI. 6 leads us to postulate 3. qatal.

VIII. Occasional Hebrew forms—הַעֲבִירָם Ex. xx. 5; xxiii. 24; Deut. v. 9; נִעְבְּרָם Deut. xiii. 3; יִדַּע *ψ* cxxxviii. 6; תִּאְהָבוּ Pr. i. 22—prove 1. qutul; 2. qitil; 3. qital.

IX. Notably forms like יָקוּם and יָבִין are virtually yaquwum a. yabiyin (not yaqwum a. yabyin). Hence we find again 1. qutul; 2. qitil. Similarly יָבֵא = yabawa' points to 3. qatal.

The result of our study may be summed up as follows. We find three types of the imperfect tense-stem:

1. qatul, or, with assimilation of vowels, qutul.
2. qatil, “ “ “ “ qitil.
3. qatal, “ “ dissimilation “ “ qital (qutal).

The relation of the perfect to the imperfect tense-stem may be represented as follows:

1. Perf. qatul. Imperf. qatul.
2. “ qatil. “ qatal.
3. “ qatal “ qatil.

The symbolism of tense vocalization is thus rendered complete. Qatul for qatil belongs to a later development, when, as in Hebrew, verbs of the type יִבֹּל assume the form of that of יִבֹּל, and yaqtil becomes impracticable as it may be confounded with the corresponding form of the causative stem which is certainly of later age. יִבֹּל and יִבֹּל are other attempts at differentiation; still cf.

יִבֹּל "he goes up" and "he leads up."

NOTE.—I should throw out the suggestion that the other stems of the Semitic verb are not only *derived* from the simple stem, but are much posterior to it in time. It seems that the tripartite mechanism of the simple stem served for a long time to render the formation of new stems unnecessary. Cf. فَرَعَ "to be

idle," فَرَعَ "to bring to an end;" הַיָּד הַקְּצֵרָה "Is the hand of Yahweh too short?" and זֹרַע עֲוֹלָה יִקְצֹר-אֹן "He who soweth wrong-doing, reapeth (= cuts short) trouble" (Num. XI. 23 a. Pr. XXII. 8). When the additional stems were formed, some of the old forms remained. Hence we find combinations like נָגַשׁ (N reflex.) a. נִגַּשׁ, נָפַטַר (Mishnic) a. נִפְטַר I Sam. XIX. 10, נָכַנַם a. נִכְנַם (both Mishnic, the latter in accordance with the traditional pronunciation, though a mistaken zeal leads purists to read נִכְנַם).